BEFORE THERE WAS A GURU December 28

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH: Lambros Callimahos is remembered at NSA as an instructor in the most advanced course on cryptology that was offered in-house. He was serious about his subject, and the class produced first-rate cryptologists for NSA operations.

Callimahos also was noted for his eccentricities and for the persona he created for himself. It might not be too much to say that he was his own avatar. He referred to himself, and encouraged others to do the same, as "the Guru." At class reunion dinners he would wear faux Asian garb—Nehru jackets and sometimes a turban.

Before Callimahos entered the U.S. Army in World War II, he had taught himself cryptology as a hobby, and his skill was recognized when he enlisted. The plan was for him to take officer training, then join William Friedman in preparing training materials and a course to teach new assignees at Arlington Hall Station, the Army's cryptologic headquarters. Instead, there was a glitch in his orders; after earning his commission, Callimahos spent World War II in India solving Japanese ciphers.

When "the Guru" returned from overseas, he did get the opportunity to teach classes at Arlington Hall, first in uniform and then as a civilian employee.

This photograph was recently discovered in an unsorted collection of pictures about life at Arlington Hall, and shows Captain Callimahos teaching a class. The date is not given, but it must have been shortly after the world war ended; Callimahos is wearing a shoulder patch showing his service in the China-Burma-India Theater of War. The diagram on the blackboard indicates that he was teaching traffic analysis; we don't know whether this was a separate class or if he was teaching it as an adjunct to cryptanalysis.

Oh, and check it out—every table has a couple of ashtrays close at hand.